Rapture in the New World: Prophecy, Presence, and the Marian Image in New Spain

Although recent scholarship has led to a better understanding of eschatological thought in Spanish America, particularly as it relates to mendicant missionary projects, the importance of the fifteenth-century Blessed Amadeus da Sylva is routinely overlooked. This paper examines the visionary’s raptures and their relevance to Marian devotions in New Spain. Prophesizing a new pastor angelicus and revealing the Virgin’s promise to be present in her images for all time, the writings of Blessed Amadeus resonated with Mexican religious who were not only prone to frame the spiritual conquest in millenarian, prophetic rhetoric, but were also focused on celebrating and advancing local Marian icons. The paper reveals that writers such as Baltasar de Medina, Agustin de Vetancurt, and Francisco de Florencia strategically appropriated the raptures for their own colonial projects, even at the risk of challenging Eucharistic primacy and the value of Transubstantiation.